

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 08 TEL AVIV 006337

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [IS](#) [KMDR](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#) [REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. 10th Anniversary of Rabin Assassination
- [1](#)2. Iran

Key stories in the media:

Maariv reported that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice may arrive in Israel as early as the beginning of next week.

The Jerusalem Post led with Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz's assurance to Secretary Rice that Israel would not interfere in the upcoming PA elections even if Hamas participates. However, the newspaper quoted a senior Israeli diplomatic official as saying Thursday that Israel will not give wanted Hamas activists "immunity" and free movement in the West Bank just because they are involved in an election campaign. Ha'aretz and Israel Radio reported that Mofaz and the Quartet's special disengagement envoy James Wolfensohn have agreed that the parties will try to reach understandings on the Egypt-Gaza border crossings within a week. The media reported that Wolfensohn and Secretary Rice are pressing Israel to take measures to

SIPDIS
alleviate the Palestinians' hardships. Ha'aretz reported that on her upcoming visit to Israel Secretary Rice will demand that Jerusalem immediately remove all obstacles to the passage of cargo between Israel and Gaza through the Erez and Karni checkpoints.

Ha'aretz led with a report that senior Hamas officials have recently asked Egypt and Jordan whether either country would be willing to allow the organization's headquarters to relocate to its territory. The queries were reportedly made due to Hamas's assessment that Syria, where both Hamas and Islamic Jihad headquarters are located, may force both groups to leave in an effort to divert growing international pressure sparked by a UN investigation into the murder of former Lebanese PM Rafiq Hariri. Ha'aretz writes that both Egypt and Jordan apparently refused.

IDF Radio and other leading media cited a warning issued Thursday by senior officers from the IDF's Northern Command that Hizbullah is trying to carry out a significant terrorist attack along Israel's northern border. The media reported that the officers' main concern was that Hizbullah would attempt to kidnap soldiers and civilians.

All media, except the ultra-Orthodox newspapers, highlighted the 10th anniversary of the late Yitzhak Rabin's assassination on November 4, 1995. Maariv bannered a comment made on Thursday by Vice PM Ehud Olmert that the Oslo agreements constituted a courageous step.

Major media reported that on Thursday, 15 to 20 thousand people marched toward the Iranian Embassy in Rome to protest the statement by Iran's President

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that "Israel should be wiped off the map." Ha'aretz quoted Italian FM Gianfranco Fini as saying he would not participate in the rally, despite a promise to Israel that he would do so, in order to avoid damaging Italian national interests.

Hatzofe reported that Deputy Defense Minister Zeev Boim told the Knesset plenum Wednesday that Israel intends to authorize the construction of a Palestinian school on the grounds of the Jewish cemetery in Hebron.

Yediot bannered a call by Vice Premier Shimon Peres to the other contenders to Labor Party leadership to help him defeat Histadrut Labor Federation Secretary-General Knesset Member Amir Peretz in the contest scheduled to take place on Wednesday. Other media reported on Peres's attempt to widen his gap with Peretz.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the trial of former AIPAC employees Steve Rosen and Keith Weissman will begin on April 25, nearly four months later than the originally scheduled date of January 3. The newspaper reported that the court accepted both sides' contentions that they need sufficient time to deal with issues of classified information before the trial begins.

Leading media reported that secular Israelis will now be able to join the National Religious Party. However, some media reported that the party will only admit new members who adhere to the Jewish tradition. Maariv notes that the USD's representative rate, reached a 30-month high on Thursday -- 4.67 shekels.

Yediot tells the story of "Gmul," an espionage operation against the Soviet Union, in which the Mossad started recruiting agents in Eastern Europe in 1968. The newspaper reported that the Shin Bet subsequently started a successful intelligence campaign of its own.

Yediot reported that an officer from the IDF's Medical Corps was lightly wounded Thursday by a Qassam rocket at Nahal Oz base, next to the Gaza Strip, and that the IDF responded with artillery fire into the Strip.

Ha'aretz and Israel Radio reported that in the report it forwarded to the state attorney's office on Wednesday, the Civil Service Commission found that Israel's Ambassador to the U.S., Danny Ayalon, could face a disciplinary court over alleged irregularities during his tenure. The media cited Ayalon's denial of the allegations against him.

Maariv reported that Hillel Halkin, an intellectual who emigrated from the U.S., recently wrote in the U.S. magazine Commentary, which is identified with the Neo-Conservatives, that he advocates an Israeli withdrawal from 90 percent of the West Bank, in exchange for U.S. recognition of Israel's new border and the postponement of Palestinian statehood. Maariv prints an extensive interview with Halkin about his ideas.

Maariv quoted nuclear whistleblower Mordecai Vanunu as saying around a month ago, in a phone interview with a cable TV station in Louisiana, that Israel will soon use nuclear weapons. He also reportedly said that Israel is able to strike any city in the world with nuclear weapons, and that the disengagement was an act of propaganda.

Maariv printed the results of a recent TNS/Teleseker Polling Institute survey:
"Ten years after the murder of Yitzhak Rabin, who do you believe has been the follower of Rabin's true course over the past five years?" Peres: 48.6 percent; Sharon: 25.6 percent; Ehud Barak: 13.2 percent; Matan Vilnai: 12.6 percent.
Maariv cited the results of a Stanley Greenberg poll conducted in the U.S., which shows that 46 percent of Americans (as opposed to 49 percent before the disengagement) support Israel. The poll also found that 10 percent of Americans support the Palestinians (as opposed to 14 percent before the disengagement). Maariv says that the poll was conducted by a PR organization in the U.S., which is funded by Jewish-Americans, and that the poll's organizers had first tried to make the results look like there had been a rise in support for Israel, most likely in order not to present their work as a failure. Maariv writes that the erroneous results had been sent to the Foreign Ministry's Information and Media Division and to the media.

Erratum: The media reported that the 12-year-old Palestinian boy from Jenin who was hit by IDF fire Thursday was not killed, but severely wounded. He had

been holding a toy F-16 rifle.

1. 10th Anniversary of Rabin Assassination:

Summary:

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "On the 10th anniversary of Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, it would be appropriate to adopt the most practical lesson from the murder and finally bring the state's full authority to bear on right-wing outlaws who threaten the country from within."

Senior columnist Dan Margalit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "It wasn't only the lesson [of Rabin's assassination] that prevented bloodshed [during the disengagement move], but it definitely helped." The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "As Israel solemnly remembers the brave leader who in six days beat three Arab armies that demanded war, only to be gunned down by a Jew who objected to the path by which he had chosen to pursue peace, we hope all Israelis will remember that the Jewish state depends on its citizens' mutual solidarity, and that such solidarity is about respecting and compromising with each other."

Block Quotes:

I. "A Lesson From the Rabin Legacy"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (November 4): "On the 10th anniversary of Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, it would be appropriate to adopt the most practical lesson from the murder and finally bring the state's full authority to bear on right-wing outlaws who threaten the country from within. For more than 30 years, the religious right has made a laughing stock of law and democracy, overpowering heads of state and cabinet ministers one after the other. Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz apparently is politically afraid of another confrontation with settlers in an election year. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain the delay in evacuating 24 outposts that already have been recognized as being illegal, and which could be emptied at any moment. The cabinet agreed to such an evacuation in March 2001, and reconfirmed its commitment to the decision upon the submission of the Sasson report on illegal outposts this March.... Sharon may be seeking the right timing to evacuate the outposts, but any date that is chosen is too late. An atmosphere of mutiny is developing around the outposts, as is a sense of power among the youth, some of whom are the children and grandchildren of Gush Emunim's founders. This is the second generation of destroyers of Israeli democracy, and not settlement pioneers as they try to portray themselves.... Religious Zionism has not assimilated democratic values and learned its lesson."

II. "We Have Learned Something, After All"

Senior columnist Dan Margalit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (November 4): "Have the proper conclusions from Yitzhak Rabin's assassination one decade ago been learned? Have they been appropriately implemented and internalized? These questions are usually answered negatively.... However, a partial, initial, and significant answer has built up. In a dramatic, unprecedented confrontation -- unlike the situation at the time of the peace treaty with Egypt -- 8,800 settlers were uprooted from their homes in Gush Katif and northern Samaria [i.e. the northernmost part of the West Bank]; during that stormy precedent, only a few red lines, which are vital to Jewish togetherness in this divided land, were crossed. Both sides demonstrated adult self-restraint, which was a thorn in the flesh of the opposing parties.... It wasn't only the lesson [of Rabin's assassination] that prevented bloodshed at Kfar Maimon, Neve Dekalim, and Sa-Nur, but it definitely helped."

III. "A Decade On"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post

editorialized (November 4): "For all Rabin's mistakes, they dwarf in comparison with the conduct of some of his opponents. Their failure back in the 1990s to keep the debate civil was politically catastrophic from their viewpoint, and morally corrupt from any viewpoint. Their nonchalant, even gleeful, resort to the basest rhetoric and depictions surely created an atmosphere conducive to Rabin's murder. If not the murder's shock, then at least the Likud's subsequent endorsement of the Oslo Accords, and Ariel Sharon's dismantlement of settlements, should have made them humbly concede that the arms they were twisting were not just this or that leader's, but mainstream Israel's. Tragically, such humility has yet to emerge among the fanatics who now portray Ariel Sharon much the way they did Rabin before his assassination. Sharon, for his part, also seems not to have drawn all the necessary conclusions from the murder. Like his good friend, the prime minister carried out a controversial scheme of his own, the disengagement plan, while focusing on maintaining his resolve and disregarding the need for persuasion and empathy. As Israel solemnly remembers the brave leader who in six days beat three Arab armies that demanded war, only to be gunned down by a Jew who objected to the path by which he had chosen to pursue peace, we hope all Israelis will remember that the Jewish state depends on its citizens' mutual solidarity, and that such solidarity is about respecting and compromising with each other."

12. Iran:

Summary:

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The time has come [for Israel] to come down from the stands.... The annihilation pronouncement from Tehran calls for a re-examination of the strategy vis-a-vis Iran under its current regime."

Block Quotes:

"Hitler From Tehran"

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (November 4): "There is an upside to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's shocking call to wipe Israel off the map: it is a good thing that the Iranian leader has revealed his hopes. For by doing so, he has helped those who are still undecided as to how to relate to the Iranian regime.... Israel has adopted a tactic vis-a-vis Iran of sitting in the balcony, as it does in international disputes over Bashar Assad's regime in Syria and Emile Lahud's Lebanon, where Hizbullah operates. In so doing, Israel apparently is signaling that it does not want to be pushed to the forefront of activity against Iran, and is leaving the work to others. The erroneous conclusion is that by doing so, the country will not become a target of its enemies.... The time has come to come down from the stands. There is no need to do so with a marching band, and this writer is not recommending a declaration of war against the Iranian regime. But Israel has good levers for applying pressure on Iran, which can be very bothersome -- for example, by aiding Kurds and the mujahideen in its territory who oppose the regime.... The struggle against Iranian nuclear arms development needs to focus not only on intelligence gathering, which is quite good, but also on additional ways, with the goal to foil such development. Although there is great doubt over whether a military option should be pursued, especially by a small state like Israel, that does not mean the country should give up on building appropriate forces. Clearly, the annihilation pronouncement from Tehran calls for a re-examination of the strategy vis-a-vis Iran under its current regime."

JONES